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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SCENESETTER FOR SEPTEMBER 26-28 VISIT OF
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FRIED

Classified By: COM Tina S. Kaidanow for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The successful September 20 Contact Group ministerial with Secretary Rice at the helm was viewed here as further indication that the U.S. government will press for a timetable that delivers a status determination by the end of 2006. This remains the sole and almost obsessive focus of Kosovar leaders, and your visit, like DAS DiCarlo's earlier in September, will provide a necessary corrective to push Kosovo officials to recognize their own responsibilities in the status process. Standards fulfillment must stay at the center of Kosovars' attention, and they must be convinced to take the message of decentralization to their increasingly skeptical -- and vocal -- Albanian public. In conversations with the President, the Prime Minister and the Unity Team, your unambiguous message should be to "stay out of CG politics and concentrate instead on your own": Unity Team leaders -- especially those in the governing LDK -- need to bring recalcitrant Assembly delegates to heel and prepare party members at Kosovo and municipal levels for those aspects of the status settlement related to minority rights that must/must be embraced and implemented. End summary.

Kosovars Fret Pointlessly Over End Game Scenarios

¶2. (C) With the last few months of the year approaching, every Kosovar's fancy has turned to thoughts of independence. Each step in the status process is endlessly analyzed and turned over for what it might mean by way of final status determination. Less time, unfortunately, is spent in contemplation of what can be accomplished on the Kosovar Albanian side to make the status outcome a positive one.

¶3. (C) The good news is that standards fulfillment is proceeding; by various counts, up to nine of the 13 priority Contact Group standards have been completed and Prime Minister Ceku's office is intent on finishing up the rest. You can encourage him in this, and urge him to exercise the necessary leadership in the Kosovo Assembly to get the job done.

¶4. (C) Less positive is the increasingly shrill tone of media and political discourse in Kosovo on the prospect of decentralization and the devolution of significant governing authority to Serb-majority municipalities, which will be an integral part of the settlement no matter what the ultimate status outcome. The broadest part of the Kosovar public is ambivalent on the issue of decentralization, but the frightening prospect of "giving up precious bits of Kosovo" to the Serbs has been quite cleverly manipulated by those within the ruling LDK party who seek to unseat President Sejdiu from his position of prominence and instead install Nexhat Daci, an autocratic nationalist who was successfully ousted as Assembly Speaker some months back. You should underscore to Sejdiu in the strongest possible terms the need

to get his party house (and Assembly caucus) in order and effectively counter his LDK enemies by using his position as Kosovo President to build support for the Ahtisaari approach.

15. (C) The message to the combined negotiating team, which has -- remarkably -- held together despite the almost constant efforts of its opposition members (Hashim Thaci and Vetton Surroi) to condition continued unity on a reshuffling of government, should be sharp and pointed: stop obsessing about possible status scenarios (and your own political ambitions) and get on with your work, particularly the business of selling Ahtisaari's package to your parties and people. We are pressing the team to agree on a media plan that gets them out and about, but apathy and mutual mistrust have inhibited fruitful action. You can stress again the time urgency of joint Unity Team appearances, both on television and in person, especially in those municipalities where opposition to decentralization is greatest. The international community and USOP can help in this effort, but we cannot supplant the voice of those who have negotiated the package and must stand by its content.

UNMIK, KFOR, Contact Group: Need for Close Coordination, Active Planning on Transition

16. (C) You will meet with newly appointed SRSJ Joachim Ruecker, DSRSJ Steve Schook, OSCE Head of Mission Werner Wnendt, EU liaison office head Torbjorn Sohlstrom, and COMKFOR LTG Roland Kather (the latter separately), as well as have a chance to talk to local Contact Group representatives. Ruecker was a good partner to us as the previous head of UNMIK's economic pillar, but he has spent less time in Kosovo than in New York over the few weeks since becoming SRSJ. You can congratulate him on his enhanced responsibilities while

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emphasizing the importance of moving forward smartly on transition planning for the post-UNMIK era. UNMIK foot-draggers at lower levels of the bureaucracy have yet to produce a comprehensive turnover scheme, but we do have the advantage of close cooperation with our local EU partners in pressing for faster UN action. You can get a sense first hand of EU plans for the follow-on international mission to be established post-status, including its critical Rule of Law component.

17. (C) COMKFOR Kather, on the ground only since early September, is far and away an improvement over his Italian predecessor. Savvier and more respectful of political imperatives, he understands the need to be responsive to capitals and to the NAC, though he will guard his prerogatives in determining the appropriate level of military force to apply to his assigned tasks. After considerable pressure was brought to bear on the previous commander, KFOR's presence in northern Kosovo has grown to roughly battalion size; the Germans occupy "Camp Nothing Hill" in the far northern corner of Kosovo until the end of October, and U.S. forces will rotate in next. Kather has said he will look at ways of increasing the length of rotation from its current (and insufficient) two weeks, and he is trying to establish some permanence at Nothing Hill though hampered by lack of funds. Kather is also acting swiftly to expand KFOR's visibility in the wake of several recent bombings in southern Kosovo, one of which was ethnically-inspired.

18. (C) The more robust KFOR presence in the north, along with a plus-up in international civilian police, has been registered by the Serb leadership, which is far more cautious in its pronouncements these days. USG assistance projects have also had the beneficial impact of promoting direct links with Serb municipal authorities in the north. You will see the UNMIK representative in Mitrovica (a former FSO) and meet directly with three of the more moderate Serb leaders. Despite their acknowledgement that independence is the likeliest outcome of the status process, they cannot yet tear themselves away from Belgrade's influence or contemplate

post-status arrangements that would associate their parties with Kosovar institutions. You can encourage them to remain engaged with the international community and stay open to the eventual provisions of the Ahtisaari settlement, which will heavily favor their interests. In a subsequent press opportunity, you can make the same points to the larger Serb audience.

Public Diplomacy: Selling the Package

¶9. (U) In addition to some time with the Serb press, you will make an appearance in front of the Pristina press corps after your meetings with the President and the Unity Team. Expect questions on the USG view of independence and the timing of the status announcement, as well as on the construct of the UN Security Council resolution related to status. The big points to get across:

-- As Secretary Rice and the Contact Group made clear on September 20, we hope to see the status process concluded by the end of 2006.

-- But to make that happen, Kosovo must do its part. The Unity Team has engaged productively in negotiations in Vienna; they must do everything possible to finalize an agreement with President Ahtisaari and UNOSK. Kosovo must also fulfill the 13 Contact Group priority standards without delay.

-- A crucial part of the settlement process will be Kosovar acceptance and implementation of decentralization.

-- Decentralization is not about carving up Kosovo. It's about providing meaningful guarantees to ethnic communities in Kosovo and ensuring that they have appropriate authority at local level to live their lives in peace and security. Minority protections via decentralization are part of modern European life and have been successfully implemented throughout Europe. With acceptance of decentralization, Kosovo will demonstrate its responsibility and its readiness to move forward in the status process.

¶10. (U) U.S. Office Pristina does not/not clear this cable for release to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.
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